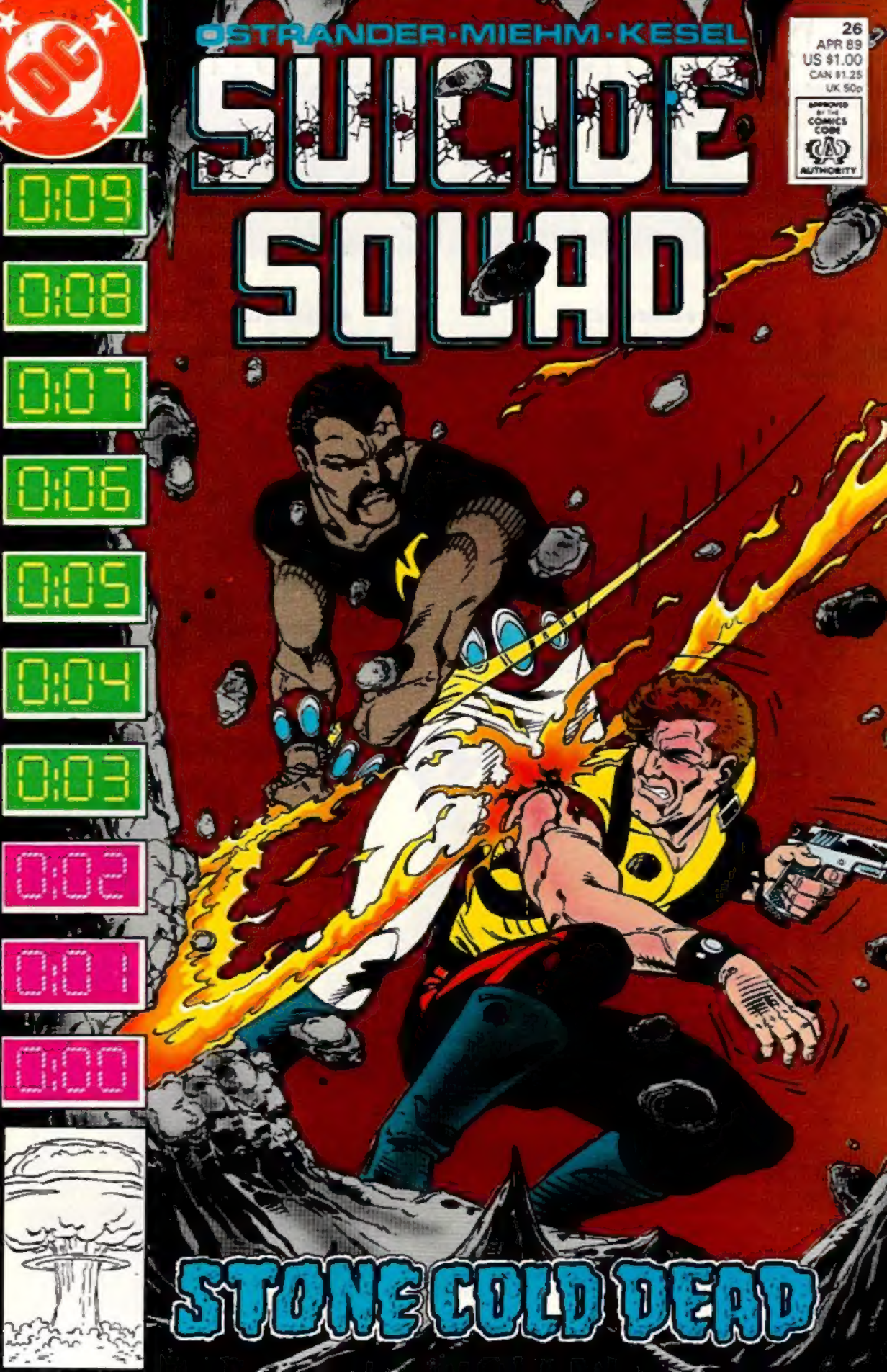
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SUICIDE SQUAD
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APR 89
US $1.00
CAN $1.25
UK 50p
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
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STONE COLD DEAD

**SUICIDE SQUAD** 26 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SUICIDE SQUAD, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate $9.00, Canada $11.00, all other foreign $19.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017. (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
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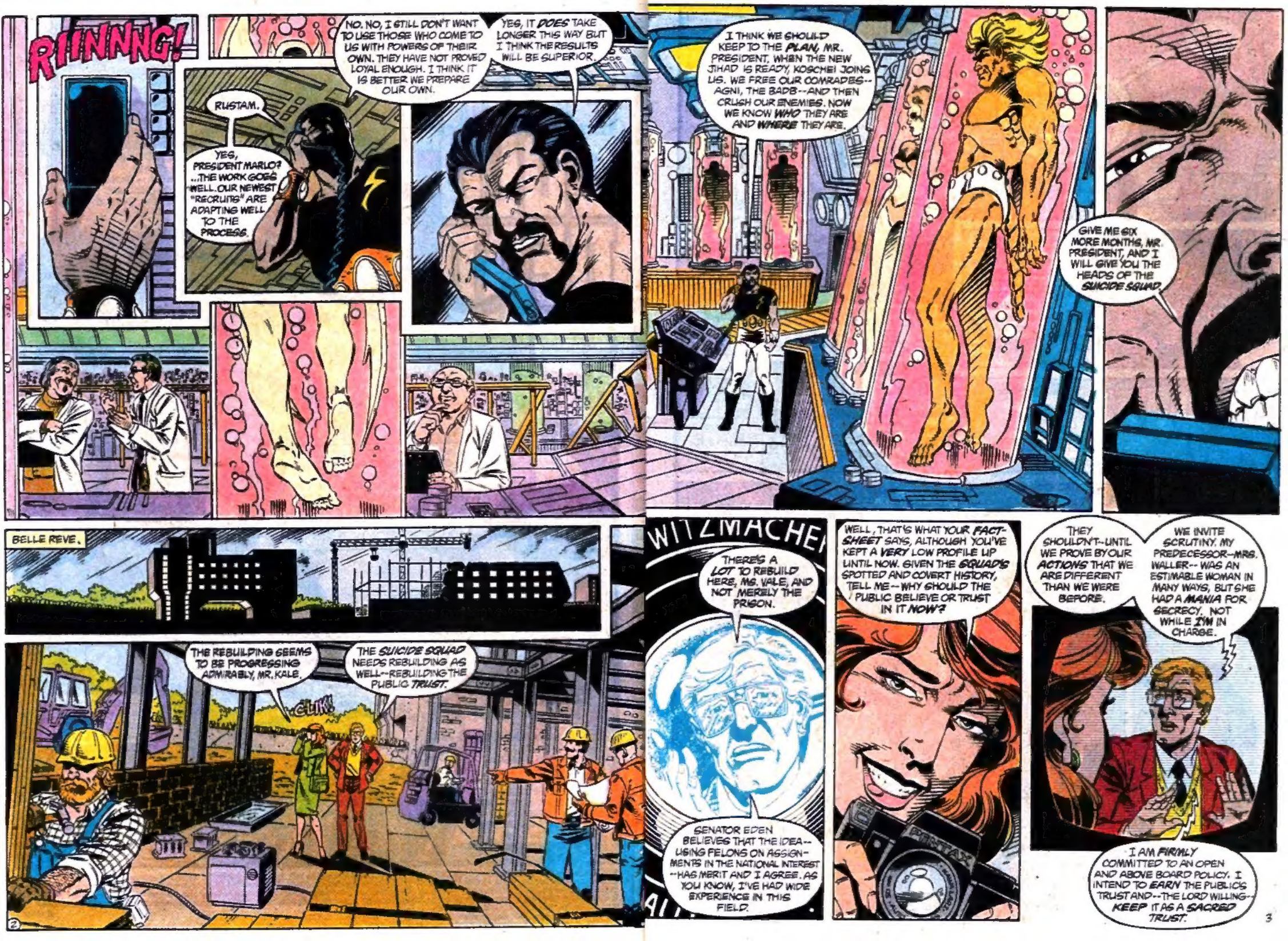
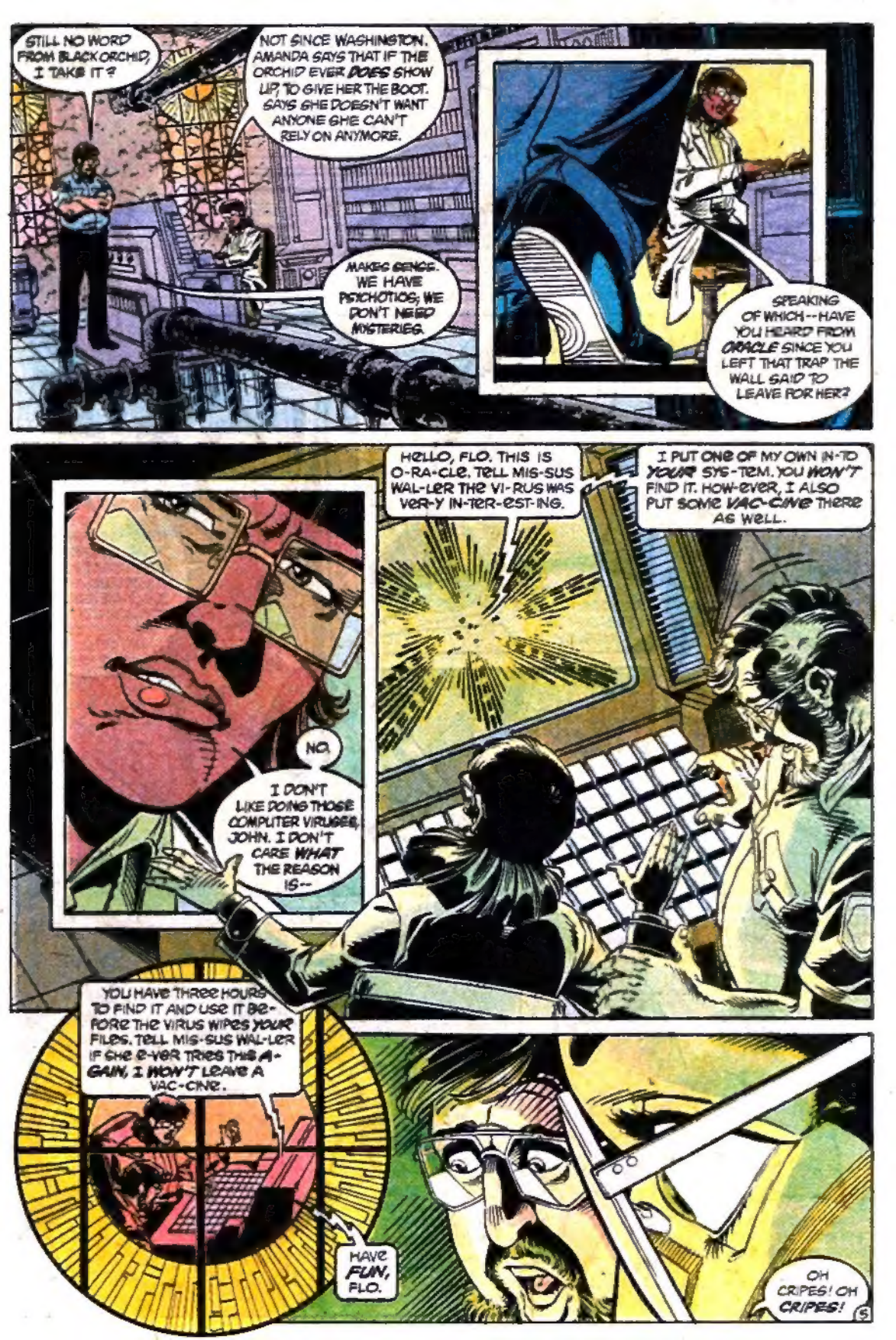
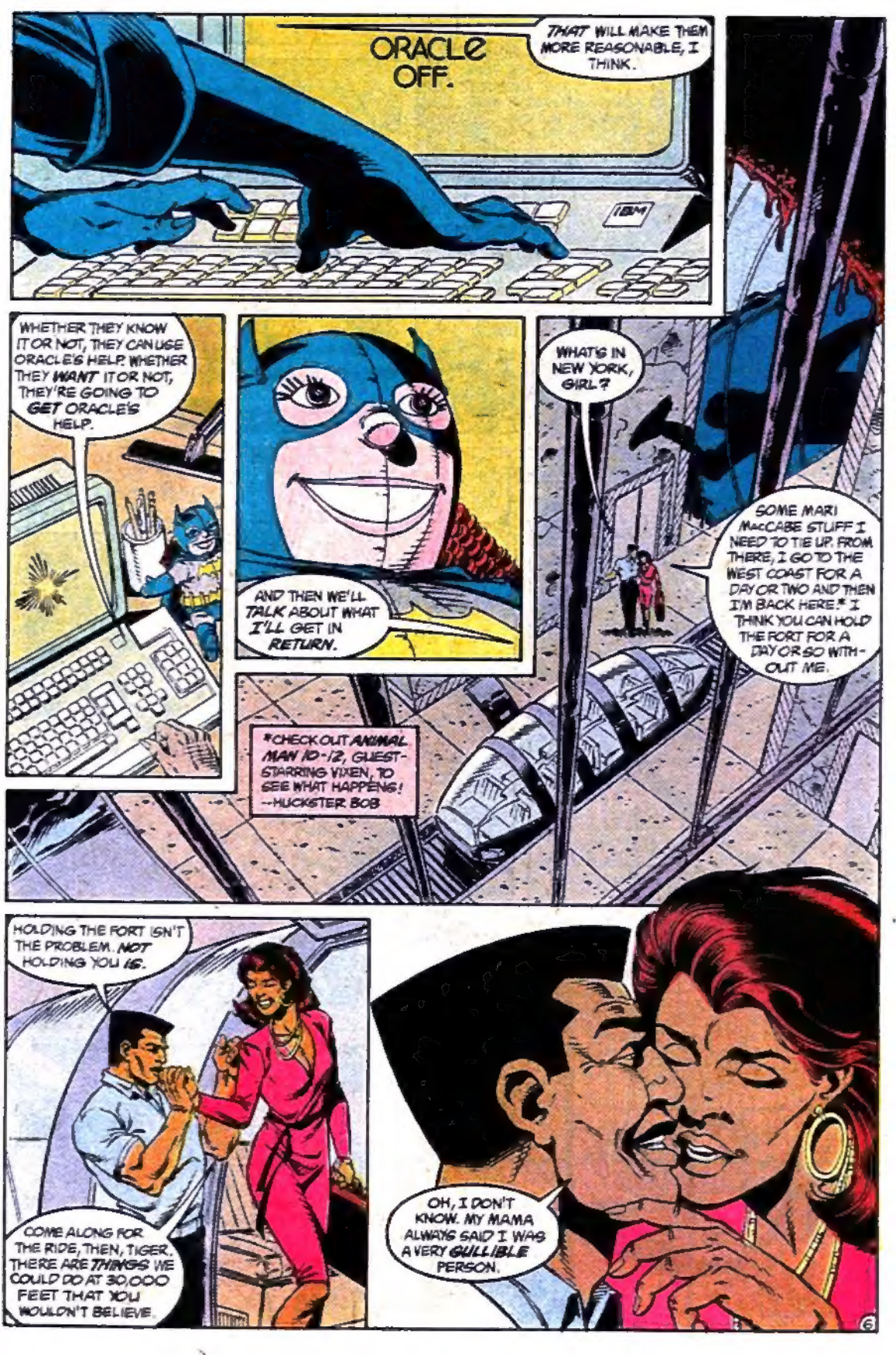

RIINNNG!
RUSTAM.
YES, PRESIDENT MARLO? ...THE WORK GOES WELL. OUR NEWEST "RECRUITS" ARE ADAPTING WELL TO THE PROCESS.
NO. NO, I STILL DON'T WANT TO USE THOSE WHO COME TO US WITH POWERS OF THEIR OWN. THEY HAVE NOT PROVED LOYAL ENOUGH. I THINK IT IS BETTER WE PREPARE OUR OWN.
YES, IT DOES TAKE LONGER THIS WAY BUT I THINK THE RESULTS WILL BE SUPERIOR.
I THINK WE SHOULD KEEP TO THE PLAN, MR. PRESIDENT, WHEN THE NEW JIHAD IS READY, KOSCHEI JOINS US. WE FREE OUR COMRADES--AGNI, THE BADB--AND THEN CRUSH OUR ENEMIES. NOW WE KNOW WHO THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY ARE.
GIVE ME SIX MORE MONTHS, MR. PRESIDENT, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE HEADS OF THE SUICIDE SQUAD.
BELLE REVE.
THE REBUILDING SEEMS TO BE PROGRESSING ADMIRABLY, MR. KALE.
CLIK!
THE SUICIDE SQUAD NEEDS REBUILDING AS WELL--REBUILDING THE PUBLIC TRUST.
WITZMACHER
THERE'S A LOT TO REBUILD HERE, MS. VALE, AND NOT MERELY THE PRISON.
SENATOR EDEN BELIEVES THAT THE IDEA--USING FELONS ON ASSIGNMENTS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST--HAS MERIT AND I AGREE. AS YOU KNOW, I'VE HAD WIDE EXPERIENCE IN THIS FIELD.
WELL, THAT'S WHAT YOUR FACT-SHEET SAYS, ALTHOUGH YOU'VE KEPT A VERY LOW PROFILE UP UNTIL NOW. GIVEN THE SQUAD'S SPOTTED AND COVERT HISTORY, TELL ME--WHY SHOULD THE PUBLIC BELIEVE OR TRUST IN IT NOW?
THEY SHOULDN'T--UNTIL WE PROVE BY OUR ACTIONS THAT WE ARE DIFFERENT THAN WE WERE BEFORE.
WE INVITE SCRUTINY. MY PREDECESSOR--MRS. WALLER--WAS AN ESTIMABLE WOMAN IN MANY WAYS, BUT SHE HAD A MANIA FOR SECRECY. NOT WHILE I'M IN CHARGE.
I AM FIRMLY COMMITTED TO AN OPEN AND ABOVE BOARD POLICY. I INTEND TO EARN THE PUBLIC'S TRUST AND--THE LORD WILLING--KEEP IT AS A SACRED TRUST.

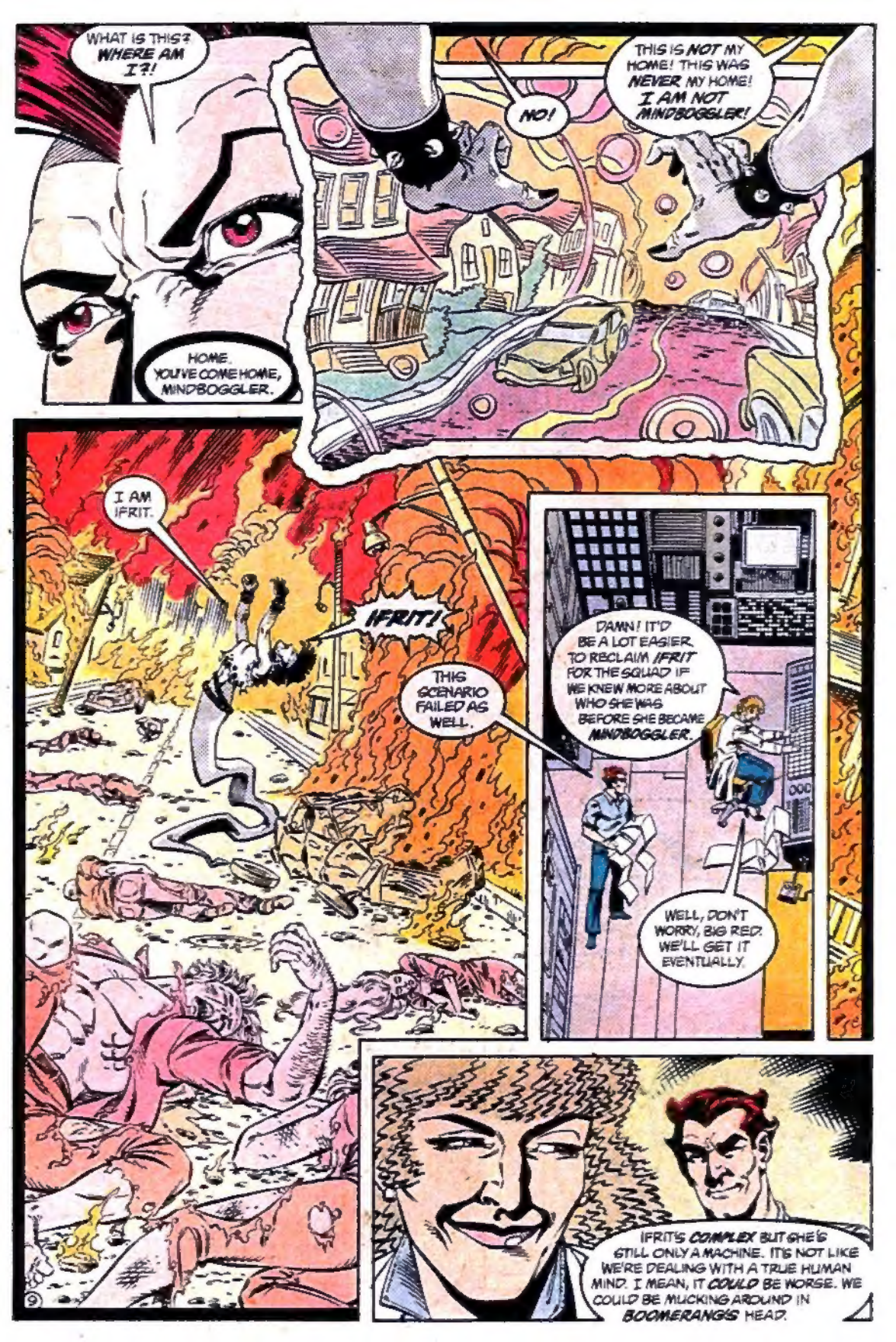
BOY, HE'S GOOD!
I MEAN--THIS GUY KOVACS IS GOOD! I KNOW HE'S JUST AN ACTOR, I KNOW KALE IS A TOTAL FABRICATION, AND HE STILL ALMOST HAS ME BELIEVING IT!
LET AMANDA HEAR YOU SAY THAT WHEN SHE GETS BACK FROM THE JUSTICE LEAGUE AND SHE'LL SET YOU STRAIGHT AS TO WHO IS TRULY RUNNING THIS SHOW REAL QUICK!
"THAT'S RIGHT--SHE'S DEPROGRAMMING THE BLUE BEETLE.* WHEN'S SHE DUE BACK?"
"ANY MINUTE NOW--UNLESS SHE STOPS BY HER APARTMENT FIRST."
*AS SEEN IN JLI 27. --BOB G.
EXIT
AND NOW THE BEETLE IS... I DON'T KNOW... WELL, AT LEAST I'M HOME!
BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
SHOULD HAVE KNOW... SUCKERED ME... AND BATMAN...!

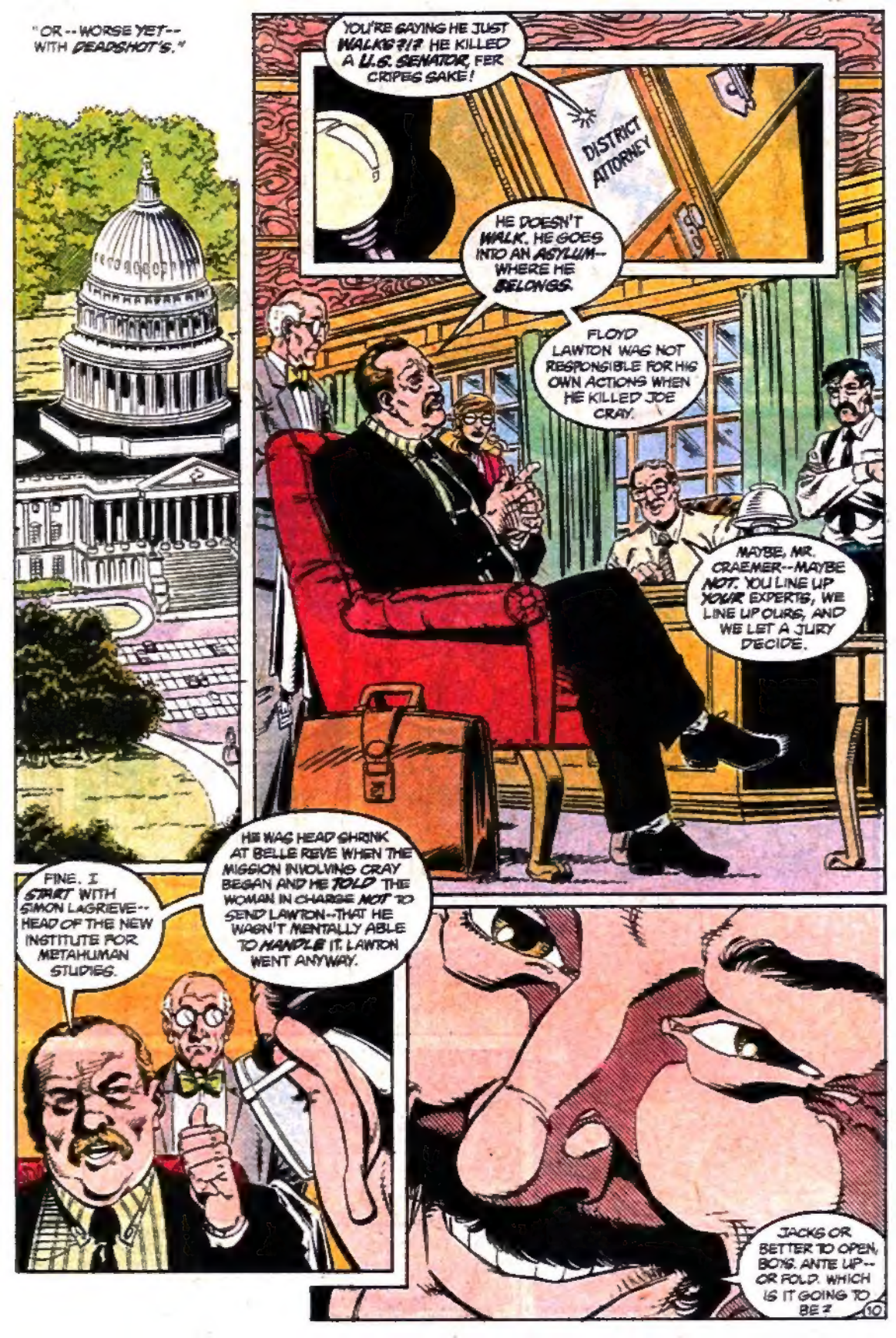

STILL NO WORD FROM BLACK ORCHID, I TAKE IT?
NOT SINCE WASHINGTON. AMANDA SAYS THAT IF THE ORCHID EVER DOES SHOW UP, TO GIVE HER THE BOOT. SAYS SHE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE SHE CAN'T RELY ON ANYMORE.
MAKES SENSE. WE HAVE PSYCHOTICS; WE DON'T NEED MYSTERIES.
SPEAKING OF WHICH--HAVE YOU HEARD FROM ORACLE SINCE YOU LEFT THAT TRAP THE WALL SAID TO LEAVE FOR HER?
HELLO, FLO. THIS IS O-RA-CLE. TELL MIS-SUS WAL-LER THE VI-RUS WAS VER-Y IN-TER-EST-ING.
I PUT ONE OF MY OWN IN-TO YOUR SYS-TEM. YOU WON'T FIND IT. HOW-EVER, I ALSO PUT SOME VAC-CINE THERE AS WELL.
NO.
I DON'T LIKE DOING THOSE COMPUTER VIRUSES, JOHN. I DON'T CARE WHAT THE REASON IS--
YOU HAVE THREE HOURS TO FIND IT AND USE IT BE-FORE THE VIRUS WIPES YOUR FILES. TELL MIS-SUS WAL-LER IF SHE E-VER TRIES THIS A-GAIN, I WON'T LEAVE A VAC-CINE.
HAVE FUN, FLO.
OH CRIPES! OH CRIPES!
5

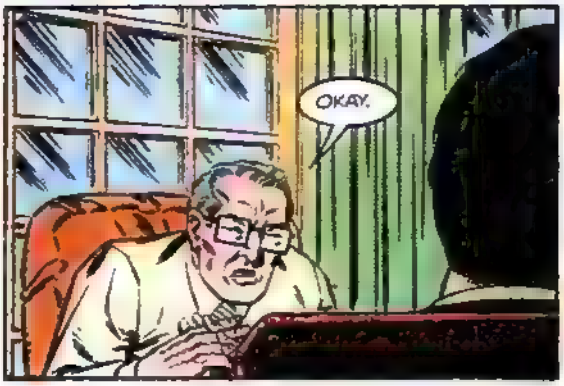

ORACLE OFF.
THAT WILL MAKE THEM MORE REASONABLE, I THINK.
IBM
WHETHER THEY KNOW IT OR NOT, THEY CAN USE ORACLE'S HELP. WHETHER THEY WANT IT OR NOT, THEY'RE GOING TO GET ORACLE'S HELP.
AND THEN WE'LL TALK ABOUT WHAT I'LL GET IN RETURN.
WHAT'S IN NEW YORK, GIRL?
SOME MARI MACCABE STUFF I NEED TO TIE UP. FROM THERE, I GO TO THE WEST COAST FOR A DAY OR TWO AND THEN I'M BACK HERE.* I THINK YOU CAN HOLD THE FORT FOR A DAY OR SO WITHOUT ME.
*CHECK OUT ANIMAL MAN 10-12, GUEST-STARRING VIXEN, TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS! --HUCKSTER BOB
HOLDING THE FORT ISN'T THE PROBLEM. NOT HOLDING YOU IS.
COME ALONG FOR THE RIDE, THEN, TIGER. THERE ARE THINGS WE COULD DO AT 30,000 FEET THAT YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE.
OH, I DON'T KNOW. MY MAMA ALWAYS SAID I WAS A VERY GULLIBLE PERSON.
6

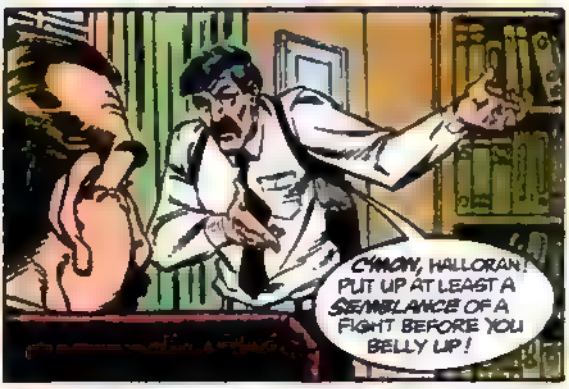
splooti
OOOH!
AHH, I HEARD THIS SOUND, SEE, AND I SORTA DUCKED AND OH DEAR IT IS ALL OVER THAT NICE DRESS AND OH MY...!
TURNER, YOU EVEN THINK OF LAUGHING AND I'M GOING TO TEAR YOUR LUNGS OUT! RIGHT AFTER I GET THE SLIME WHO DONE THIS!
NO, I DON'T THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA, HONEY. YOU'LL MISS YOUR FLIGHT.
HEY!
YOU GO ON AND HAVE YOURSELF A GOOD TIME. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THINGS HERE.
TURNER!!!
KWOOOSH!
BESIDES, I JUST GOTTA LAUGH, AND IF I DO IT WHILE YOU'RE HERE, YOU'LL KILL ME!
SHUUU

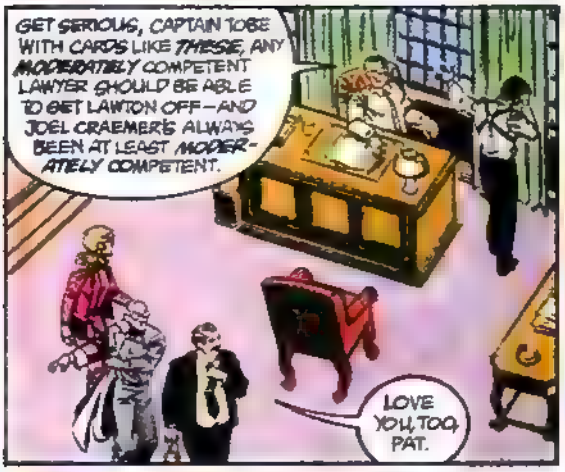
JIMMY! TIME TO COME HOME!
OKAY, MOM!
LET'S GO, PEARL!
ZLUNG!

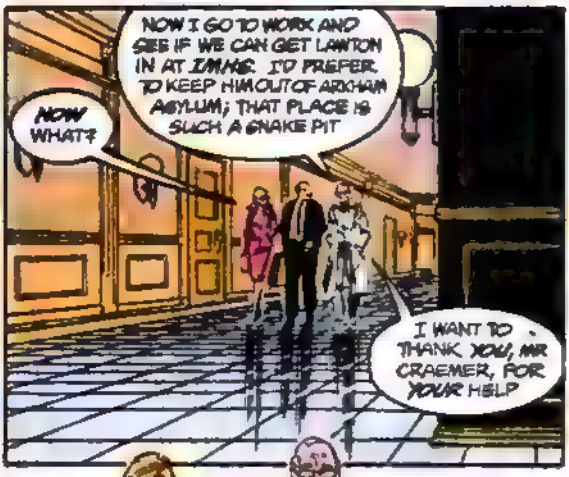

WHAT IS THIS? WHERE AM I?!
HOME. YOU'VE COME HOME, MINDBOGGLER.
NO!
THIS IS NOT MY HOME! THIS WAS NEVER MY HOME! I AM NOT MINDBOGGLER!
I AM IFRIT.
IFRIT!
THIS SCENARIO FAILED AS WELL.
DAMN! IT'D BE A LOT EASIER TO RECLAIM IFRIT FOR THE SQUAD IF WE KNEW MORE ABOUT WHO SHE WAS BEFORE SHE BECAME MINDBOGGLER.
WELL, DON'T WORRY, BIG RED. WE'LL GET IT EVENTUALLY.
IFRIT'S COMPLEX BUT SHE'S STILL ONLY A MACHINE. IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE DEALING WITH A TRUE HUMAN MIND. I MEAN, IT COULD BE WORSE. WE COULD BE MUCKING AROUND IN BOOMERANG'S HEAD.


"OR -- WORSE YET -- WITH DEADSHOT'S."
YOU'RE SAYING HE JUST WALKS?!? HE KILLED A U.S. SENATOR, FER CRIPES SAKE!
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
HE DOESN'T WALK. HE GOES INTO AN ASYLUM -- WHERE HE BELONGS.
FLOYD LAWTON WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OWN ACTIONS WHEN HE KILLED JOE CRAY.
MAYBE, MR. CRAEMER -- MAYBE NOT. YOU LINE UP YOUR EXPERTS, WE LINE UP OURS, AND WE LET A JURY DECIDE.
HE WAS HEAD SHRINK AT BELLE REVE WHEN THE MISSION INVOLVING CRAY BEGAN AND HE TOLD THE WOMAN IN CHARGE NOT TO SEND LAWTON -- THAT HE WASN'T MENTALLY ABLE TO HANDLE IT. LAWTON WENT ANYWAY.
FINE. I START WITH SIMON LAGRIEVE -- HEAD OF THE NEW INSTITUTE FOR METAHUMAN STUDIES.
JACKS OR BETTER TO OPEN, BOYS. ANTE UP -- OR FOLD. WHICH IS IT GOING TO BE?
10


OKAY.


C'MON, HALLORAN! PUT UP AT LEAST A SEMBLANCE OF A FIGHT BEFORE YOU BELLY UP!


GET SERIOUS, CAPTAIN TOBE WITH CARDS LIKE THESE, ANY MODERATELY COMPETENT LAWYER SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET LAWTON OFF—AND JOEL CRAEMER'S ALWAYS BEEN AT LEAST MODERATELY COMPETENT.
LOVE YOU, TOO, PAT.


NOW I GO TO WORK AND SEE IF WE CAN GET LAWTON IN AT IMMIG. I'D PREFER TO KEEP HIM OUT OF ARKHAM ASYLUM; THAT PLACE IS SUCH A SNAKE PIT
NOW WHAT?
I WANT TO THANK YOU, MR CRAEMER, FOR YOUR HELP

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PRO BONO IS GOOD FOR A LAWYER'S SOUL. JUST TELL THAT BROTHER OF MINE TO GIVE ME A CALL SOMETIME WHEN IT'S NOT FOR A FAVOR, OKAY?
BY THE WAY, THERE WAS ANOTHER GUY IMPLICATED IN ALL THIS. WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? HAS HE SURFACED SINCE THEN?
RICK FLAG? NO. NO ONE HAS SEEN HIM

"NO ONE HAS HEARD FROM HIM SINCE THE INCIDENT IN *WASHINGTON*."

"DEAR EVE...

"FORGIVE ME. I DON'T KNOW WHO ELSE TO WRITE. YOU WERE THE LAST PERSON THAT I REALLY TALKED TO BEFORE I-- WELL, BEFORE I WENT *AWOL*. OR WAS IT *AMOK*?

"I REALIZE THAT I'VE SCREWED UP PRETTY BAD. I SWEAR TO YOU -- I DIDN'T KNOW THAT THE WALL HAD ALREADY DEALT WITH TOLLIVER. I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL COMING APART. I COULDN'T BEAR IT; AS I TOLD YOU, ALL I'VE GOT IN MY LIFE IS THE SQUAD.

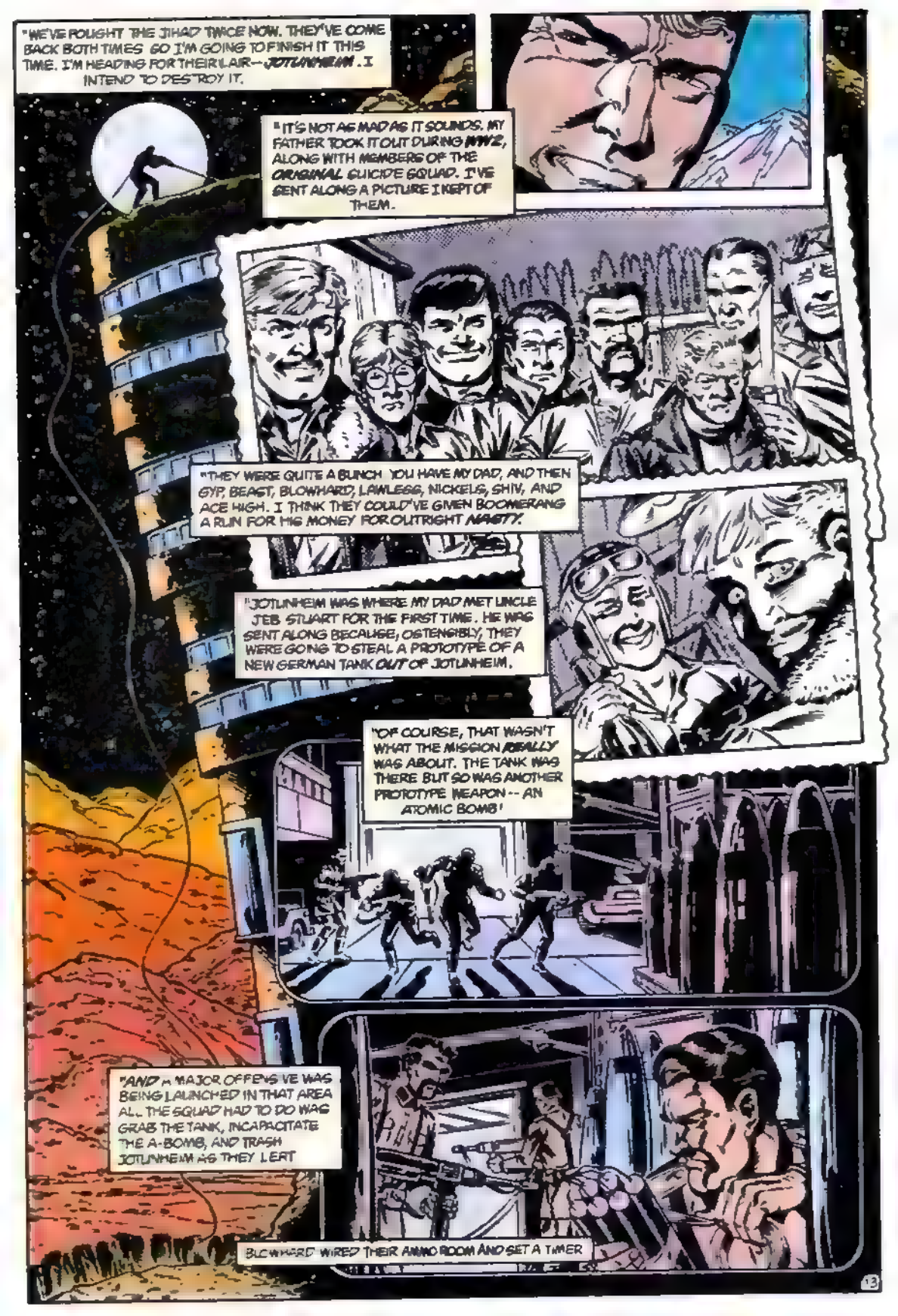
"SO I DID WHAT I THOUGHT I HAD TO IN ORDER TO SAVE IT. BIG JOKE, HUH?

"WHY DID SHE SEND DEADSHOT AFTER ME? HE WAS FURTHER 'ROUND THE BEND THAN ME. KEPT CALLING ME 'EDDIE'.

"AFTER LAWTON SHOT CRAY, I KNEW I COULDN'T GO BACK. I'VE GOT SOME RESOURCES, SOME CONTACTS -- YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEM. I GOT OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

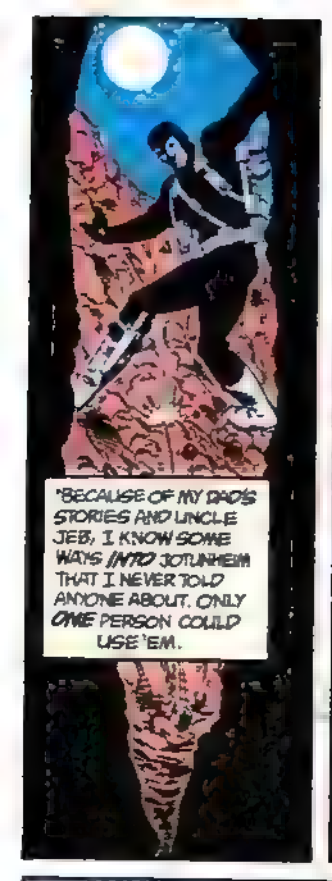
"I'VE GONE TO *QURAC*.

"I'M GOING TO TRY TO MAKE *ATONEMENT* FOR WHAT I'VE DONE."


"WE'VE FOUGHT THE JIHAD TWICE NOW. THEY'VE COME BACK BOTH TIMES SO I'M GOING TO FINISH IT THIS TIME. I'M HEADING FOR THEIR LAIR--JOTUNHEIM. I INTEND TO DESTROY IT.
"IT'S NOT AS MAD AS IT SOUNDS. MY FATHER TOOK IT OUT DURING WWI, ALONG WITH MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL SUICIDE SQUAD. I'VE SENT ALONG A PICTURE I KEPT OF THEM.
"THEY WERE QUITE A BUNCH. YOU HAVE MY DAD, AND THEN GYP, BEAST, BLOWHARD, LAWLESS, NICKELS, SHIV, AND ACE HIGH. I THINK THEY COULD'VE GIVEN BOOMERANG A RUN FOR HIS MONEY FOR OUTRIGHT NASTY.
"JOTUNHEIM WAS WHERE MY DAD MET UNCLE JEB STUART FOR THE FIRST TIME. HE WAS SENT ALONG BECAUSE, OSTENSIBLY, THEY WERE GOING TO STEAL A PROTOTYPE OF A NEW GERMAN TANK OUT OF JOTUNHEIM.
"OF COURSE, THAT WASN'T WHAT THE MISSION REALLY WAS ABOUT. THE TANK WAS THERE BUT SO WAS ANOTHER PROTOTYPE WEAPON -- AN ATOMIC BOMB!
"AND A MAJOR OFFENSIVE WAS BEING LAUNCHED IN THAT AREA AL. THE SQUAD HAD TO DO WAS GRAB THE TANK, INCAPACITATE THE A-BOMB, AND TRASH JOTUNHEIM AS THEY LEFT
BLOWHARD WIRED THEIR AMMO ROOM AND SET A TIMER

"THEY WERE TOLD, VIA SEALED ORDERS, THAT THEIR JOB WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEIR LIVES AND THAT THEY SHOULDN'T COME BACK IF THEY BOTCHED IT.
"IT WAS THE KIND OF MISSION MOST OF THEM LIKED. DAD USED TO SAY THAT THE ONLY THING THEY HATED MORE THAN EACH OTHER WAS HIM AND THE ONLY THING THEY HATED MORE THAN HIM WAS THE ENEMY.
BUDDA BUDDA!
Budda
YEEEE-HAAAA!
SCREEECH!
WHOA-HOA!
WHAROOM!
HOLEEE HANNIBAL'S HAIRPIECE!
KA-THOOM!
YOU BOZOS WANNA GET ON BOARD? BLOWHARD'S WIRED THE PLACE. WE GOTTA MAKE A RUN FOR IT!

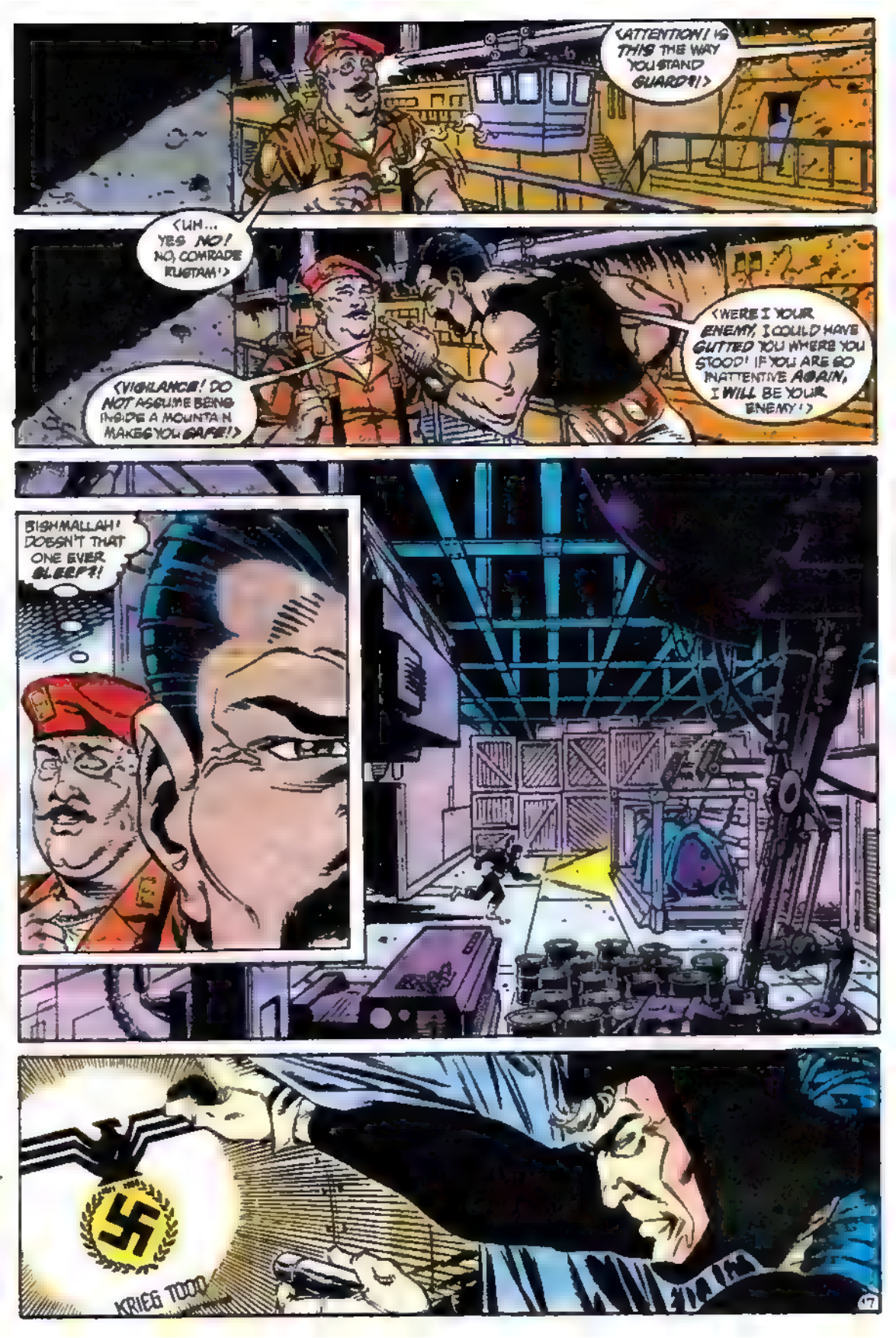
"THEY HAD TO MOVE WHILE THE GAP WAS STILL BEING BRIDGED. ONE OF THE SQUAD --THE ONE CALLED THE BEAST-- STAYED BEHIND TO SECURE THE CONTROLS."
WE'VE RUN OUT OF ROAD!
WE'VE RUN OUT OF TIME! JUMP IT!
KRA-KA-KA-DOOM
KRAUGK!
SEEMS BEAST FOUND HIS GRAVE, CAP'N!
WE'LL CARRY ON FOR HIM-- UNTIL WE ALL FIND OUR OWN.


"BECAUSE OF MY DAD'S STORIES AND UNCLE JEB, I KNOW SOME WAYS *INTO* JOTUNHEIM THAT I NEVER TOLD ANYONE ABOUT. ONLY *ONE* PERSON COULD USE 'EM.

"THE A-BOMB'S STILL IN THERE, BURIED. FROM WHAT YOU TOLD US, QURAC HAS NO IDEA IT'S THERE, BUT HAS BEEN EXCAVATING IN THE GENERAL AREA.

"I'VE GOT A NEW PRIMER AND A TIMING DEVICE. WITH LUCK, I'LL BE ABLE TO SET OFF THE BOMB FROM *INSIDE*.
"PRAY FOR ME, EVE."

CURRRK!
SNEK!!


ATTENTION! IS THIS THE WAY YOU STAND GUARD?!
UH... YES NO! NO, COMRADE KUSTAM!
VIGILANCE! DO NOT ASSUME BEING INSIDE A MOUNTAIN MAKES YOU SAFE!
WERE I YOUR ENEMY, I COULD HAVE GUTTED YOU WHERE YOU STOOD! IF YOU ARE SO INATTENTIVE AGAIN, I WILL BE YOUR ENEMY!
BISHMALLAH! DOESN'T THAT ONE EVER SLEEP?!
KRIEG TOOD

KEK!
ENGAGE

SPAKOW!
WHAM!
WHUMPF!!
0:01:30
ENGAGE

ENGAGE
GRY "GOOD-BYE", YOU SON OF A--

FWADOOM!!!
BROAAR
KRA-KA-D

**COMING: THE JANUS DIRECTIVE!**

**IT ALL STARTS NEXT WEEK WITH *CHECKMATE 15* AND THEN IN *SQUAD #27 AND 28*, BOTH ON SALE *NEXT MONTH!***

# SUICIDE NOTES

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L-3618

Dear Bob, John, Luke, Karl, etc.,

Everything came together the way I had envisioned it, thanks mostly to the fact that the cover was also the promotional ad for the issue. That tipped off the readers that Deadshot would have a hand in the story's resolution. Unfortunately, in the final analysis, Deadshot *should not have appeared here*, just as Dr. LaGrieve suggested early on. The timing couldn't have been worse, considering the result of Deadshot's own mini-series.

On the whole, I thought the story was well written, as always, and well drawn, and that it had the feeling of being a cross between *Mission: Impossible* and *The A-Team*. Unfortunately, "The Wall" never seems to "love it when a plan comes together," to use a catch-phrase from the latter series, because the missions almost always end up flawed. Hey, nobody ever said anything was really perfect, you know.

Okay, now, Deadshot's on the DL, Flag's a head case, and Waller's in dire need of a cross between Rolaids and Excedrin. Duchess/Lashina's ready to phone home, and Boomerang needs to bone up on his English. Lose the *Crocodile Dundee* impression, will you, Boomerbrain, or consider the proposed "Captain Boomerang Fan Club" scuttled.

About DEADSHOT: Very impressive, but sad to see that Floyd still doesn't want to lose the wallflower image, and consider giving a romance with Marnie a try. Tied in rather well with SS continuity, but Floyd should have been held back a month or two before returning.

Jacob Gilbert
118 4th Street, Apt. 1
Troy, NY 12180

* * * * *

Dear John, Luke, Bob, Todd, and company,

I think it was Harlan Ellison who once admonished all writers to "stir the soup"—his way of reminding writers to keep their work lively and unpredictable. In issue #22 Ostrander did a better job of soup stirring than any comic book writer I've read in the past six months.

Flag's assassination of Tolliver and his attempted murder of Cray, neatly moved Flag from being the idealist hero who thinks criminals are scum, into being a full-fledged felon himself. In light of this, Ostrander forces the reader to re-evaluate Flag as a kind of Ollie North who was so concerned about results that he lost sight of goals. He has crossed the line and even worse, Waller pushed him over the edge by not telling him about her plans. When Flag reappears (and I'm confident that he will) he will be either completely psychotic or humbled by his experiences. Waller will have to confront the fact that she failed as leader and come to grips with the idea that she's screwed up so bad, that the Squad has been revealed to the world. I can only hope you don't go into a lengthy sub-plot about her deciding to resign, only to stay on as director of the Squad at the last minute. I think Amanda is tough enough to bounce back from this and retain her role as the strongest female lead in *any* comic book series.

The Bronze Tiger and Vixen made a great team; I hope they get to work together in future issues. I would also like to see their relationship heat up because both of these characters deserve a little happiness. If they got together they might be good for each other.

In fact, to keep them from becoming "stock" characters—characters interchangeable with their white counterparts—I would like to see a scene where Amanda, Vixen, and the Tiger actually discuss how they feel about working for a government that frequently ignores the needs of the black community. I'd like to know what these characters think about apartheid, affirmative action and the way blacks are portrayed in the media. This is an aspect of their personalities that has never been sufficiently explored.

I liked the idea of the *Daily Planet* breaking the story of government-sponsored criminals but I couldn't understand why the last few panels showed the paper that broke the story as the *Daily Star*. If the *Planet* was the first to disclose the identity of the Squad, does it mean Superman will show up soon to investigate the Squad?

T.E. Pouncey
Wichita, KS

*I think John has continued to stir the soup since issue #21 and things pick up speed in just two weeks. By the end of issue #30, everything will have been stirred up real good: however, you raised some valid points about some of the characters and we'll see what John does with them in the aftermath of* The Janus Directive.

*Yeah, it should have been the Metropolis paper breaking the news, but since their national edition doesn't necessarily make the boxes in Washington, D.C., we had to show some paper carrying it, so why not its figurative predecessor? Also, just 'cause the* Planet *broke the news, it doesn't mean Supes will be involved—especially since he's out of this world!*

* * * * *

Dear Bob,

Well, that's the problem of Cray solved once and for all. You realize, I hope, that Deadshot is mentally less than stable. I wouldn't like to diagnose him but he has a severe personality disorder, if not a complete disassociation from reality. And for one moment, I thought you'd decided to kill him off, until I noticed that none of the bullets had hit anything vital. Sneaky, that.

Whether Rick Flag will continue to avoid the grim reaper after his unsanctioned activities remains to be seen. But personally, I think his actions are no more immoral than Deadshot's. Both killed for selfish reasons, and couldn't possibly justify their actions on ethical grounds. The fact that Waller wants Deadshot to continue with the group reveals the lengths she's prepared to go to, to protect her team. It may well be ultimate loyalty but she'll eventually be brought to task for it, and must realize that.

As I write this, Bush has just become President-elect, for better or worse. I suppose that the continuity this brings will augur well for the Squad. Presumably their government connections will remain stable. Or else you could use the change of President to, say, dampen down government support, or, in combination with the exposé, have the government sever ties with the group completely.

On a different note, Karl is doing a wonderful job inking Luke's pencils. The DEADSHOT series showed the best inker for Luke's work is, so far, himself, but Karl is doing it justice.

Malcolm Bourne
6 Craigwell Road

Prestwich, Manchester M25 8EF
England

*****

Dear Bob,

It's often said that comics are read for escapism. So what do I get when I turn away from the extensive media coverage of the American election and pick up a comic? The American election!

Still, "Final Round" was good, and Bush and Dukakis weren't anywhere in sight, thankfully. Just a mean little Senator, Joe Cray, who had gone power-mad and thought that by blackmail he could stay in power forever. Perhaps killing him was a little extreme, but who's to say the world isn't a better place now that he's gone?

I hope that Rick Flag will appear again in SUICIDE SQUAD. He's one of my favorites and provided he's right in the head when he does, I'd love to see him return; however, feel free to keep Deadshot out as long as you like! While interesting, the mini-series did nothing to endear him to me.

Trickster was a popular choice for Squad membership in issue #22's letter column and it would be nice to see him pop up in Belle Reve—but not as an inmate! After all, he *has* reformed. Another Flash villain it would be good to see again is Golden Glider. Any chance?

Gary Hellen
7 Chestnut Grove
Brentwood, Essex CM14 4XH
United Kingdom

*I was pushing for the Golden Glider a while back but then I found out Bill Loebs had plans for her in THE FLASH that were too good to be spoiled.*

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Dear Robert,

The conclusion of the political subplot this issue was well worth waiting for. While Flag seemed to be the featured player last month, the play-up of Deadshot could have made this book Part 5 of the DEADSHOT mini-series, which was terrific, by the way. The cast acted true to character, and even Nemesis's thoughts about Flag weren't distracting. But the ending was the high point of the book. The Squad cannot be as it has been after this, and I expect that Deadshot will be a changed man. I doubt he'll remain in the Squad, and I hope he returns as an adversary to Batman. And Flag should stay missing for a while; let Bronze Tiger or Shade take leadership of the Suicide Squad for a time.

There's no doubt that a shake-up is imminent. I won't repeat my personal requests for guest-villains but a new leader, more villains and fewer heroes, more "expendables" being expended and more revolving characters are my hopes for the next, and I hope exciting, stage for the Suicide Squad.

Jim Kelly
20 Randall Avenue, Apt. 1W
Freeport, NY 11520

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Mr. Ostrander,

Now I'm mad. In the last couple of issues of SUICIDE SQUAD you seem to have destroyed the quality that made SS so different from other books—the fact that the major characters can and do die.

Don't get me wrong—I'm not the sort of person who grades a comic by its body count. When I read SS in the past, however, the pleasure I got from seeing favorite characters like Nemesis or Nightshade was always tempered with fear that that particular person's number was up this time. It added a new dimension to comics, something sorely needed by us jaded readers—it destroyed our complacence. When I read the Annual earlier this year, I actually believed for a few minutes that you'd killed off The Wall, whereas in another book I'd have been snickering up my sleeve and waiting for the inevitable comic book trickery that brought her back to life.

But now what do I see? Here's #22. Deadshot is given a truly great death scene—powerful, moving, and perfectly in character. Then suddenly we find he's just wounded—making the entire scene I just enjoyed merely a cheap trick. You did the same thing with Nightshade and June in #21, though my relief at seeing Nightshade still alive overshadowed my irritation at the way I'd been manipulated.

What happened to the idea of a rotating membership? It seems to have jammed. I'm not recommending you slaughter the whole team—just have some members retire/quit/be released and then bring in some new characters. If the present members of the Squad simply continue in the tradition of comic book invulnerability that you seem to have embraced, the thing that sets SS apart from other team books will vanish. And I enjoy SS too much to want to see it become "just another" comic book.

Charles Raye
800 Florida Avenue NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

*Kill your darlings. It's a lesson drilled into every writer's head. Every so often a writer loves a scene or sequence so much that he will keep it beyond all rational judgment because he or she loves it. But you must kill the things you love to enhance the whole. I think we all recognized that we started to love our core group a little too much and now we have shaken ourselves up a bit and are now at work returning the book to its unpredictable nature. Just look at what we accomplished this issue.*

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Dear Suiciders,

I just finished SUICIDE SQUAD #22 and finally I knew I had to write. I've watched this book with great interest since LEGENDS and it has yet to bore me. With the election mere days away as I write this, I find the tone of this issue especially appropriate.

I'm currently taking a class at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln called "Introduction to the Political Idea" and this has helped me to become aware of the problems in our political system. The last book we read in our class was *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli. He tends to make one believe that to be in politics one must be above vice and virtue. One must use whatever means at one's disposal to maintain power. This may seem a bit power hungry—in a sense it is—but is this morally wrong? I wish we had an answer to this.

This really struck me as being the core conflict of "The Final Round." The best example of this is found in Amanda Waller. Although I often question her ethics, I found it rather interesting how she was dealing with the situation with the late Tolliver. Certainly she could have had him eliminated at any time, but he was still too sly not to have had a back-up to reveal the Squad's cover if anything happened to him. If "The Wall" had been more willing to share the load, and yes, some power with Flag, her problems would have been over. That's another point Machiavelli makes: that a prince needs to know his limitations and know when to rely on an ally for support.

When Waller first appeared she seemed a bit too fanatical, too willing to sacrifice anyone and anything that stood between her and her goals. Now it seems as though she has become a bit more concerned with her team as people. The best examples are her various conversations with Nightshade, Bronze Tiger, and even with Flag in some respects. Her interaction with the various members of the Ground Crew are often the highlights of the stories.

James A. Zank
1938 Washington
Lincoln, NE 68502

**COMING ATTRACTIONS**

In just one week, *The Janus Directive* begins in CHECKMATE! #15 and then both CHECKMATE! and SUICIDE SQUAD go *bi-weekly* for two months to tell the story of the complete subjugation and subversion of the government intelligence community. Trust us, you won't want to miss the event since it boasts the Checkmate knights, the Squad, Peacemaker, Val Vostok, Sarge Steel, King Faraday, John and Cherie Chase, Black Thorn, Major Force, the Force of July, Lois Lane, Firestorm, Nightshade, and Captain Atom plus a surprise or two.

See you in 14!

—Bob Greenberger